
THE

Lord Bishop of *LANDAFF*'s

S E R M O N

BEFORE THE

HOUSE of LORDS,

January 30, 1756.

Die Martis 3. Februarij, 1756.

Ordered,

BY the Lords Spiritual and Temporal
in Parliament assembled, That the
Thanks of this House be, and they are
hereby given to the Lord Bishop of *Lan-*
daff, for the Sermon by him preached be-
fore this House, on Friday last in the
Abbey-Church of Westminster; and he is
hereby desired to cause the same to be
printed and published.

ASHLEY COWPER,

Cler. Parliamentor.



A
S E R M O N

Preached before the

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HOUSE of LORDS,

IN THE

Abby-Church of WESTMINSTER,

On Friday, January 30, 1756.

BEING THE

Day appointed to be observed as the Day of
the Martyrdom of King CHARLES I.

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By RICHARD, Lord Bishop of LANDAFF.

L O N D O N :

Printed for H. WHITRIDGE, at the Royal-
Exchange.

A

SERMON

Preached before the

HOUSE OF LORDS,

IN THE

Abby-Church of WESTMINSTER,



On Friday 3rd 1756.

BEING THE

Day appointed to be observed as the Day of
the Martyrdom of King CHARLES I.

By RICHARD, Lord Bishop of LONDON.

LONDON:

Printed by H. WILKINSON, in Pall-mall.

1756.

Epist. to the Heb. CHAP. XII.
Part of the 5th Verse.

—*Despise not thou the Chastening of
the Lord.*

THE belief of a Providence is an essential, and most important article in religion ; and as it is connected with omnipotence, which is one of the most obvious attributes of God, and what reason teaches men, must belong to the first universal cause, a notion of it has generally prevailed, and a supreme being been admitted, not only as *creating*, but *ruling* the world ; and some sort of religious regard paid to him under that character. But a Pro-

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vidence arising from Power only is not the compleat idea of it, nor fitted to produce the proper affections towards God, or a religion in any degree worthy of him. It is an administration of righteousness, and wisdom, as well as of power, in which all things are order'd in the best manner, with a moral reference to the dispositions and behaviour of rational creatures, and in a way suitable to their respective states and circumstances: true piety arises from this belief, and on this principle are the several appointments of Providence to be accounted for. Neither the good that happens is to be ascribed to the effect of a mere undistinguishing propensity to beneficence; nor the evil and afflictions of life to a cruel delight in the misery and unhappiness of others, but the mercies and goodness, the severities and *Chastenings* of the Lord, are all to be resolved into one principle, and to be
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looked upon as the dispensations of a moral governor ordering the affairs of the world, and determining their issues according to the purposes suggested to him by perfect wisdom and goodness.

This is the rule that the best and wisest inquirers into the nature, and character of God, have laid down for the procedure of his providence; this is the light in which the scriptures constantly set it in *general*, and agreeably to this it is, that the text represents the calamities and adversities of life in *particular* as the *Chastening* of the Lord, a notion implying moral government, and a way of considering them very useful for a right apprehension of *some* dispensations of Providence; and peculiarly proper for us on this occasion, who are met together to commemorate the calamities, which it pleased God to permit to fall on our

fore-fathers by a series of events, which brought on a rebellion, and in consequence of that, the horrid fact of this day, with a long train of suffering to the whole people of the land, in which the *Chastening of the Lord* was most severely felt, almost to the utter ruin of the nation, and it's final dissolution in Church and State.

The notion of *Chastening*, which the text applies to the providence of God, is not any way inconsistent with that goodness, and benevolence of nature, which is essential to the Divine Being, though it supposeth him *purposely* disposing things in his plan of government, so as to occasion at some times troubles and uneasiness to his creatures; for goodness, the most perfect, doth not imply that the result of every particular dispensation must be *immediate* happiness, nor does it follow, that
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there can be *no* instances of calamitous, and afflicting occurrences in the government of a Being, who is infinitely kind and benevolent; because these attributes do not consist in *single* acts, but comprehend a whole series of events, tending to one common end, and fitted to compose an entire system of good in the whole: and therefore some dispensations, which have a contrary appearance in a particular view of them, may, as they relate to the entire design, be serving the best purposes, and promoting in the issue a real good. And *such* is the idea the text suggests to us of the most suspected part of Providence, the troubles and afflictions of life, under the character of *Chastenings*; which imports, that these occurrences are not mere arbitrary appointments of God, with no other design than to make men miserable; but have a relation to their greatest good, if virtue is allowed to be so,
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being admitted into his providential proceedings with a merciful design to reclaim those who are not past amendment, from the error of their ways, and to prevent by some present suffering the much greater evil they would occasion to themselves, and the world about them, if permitted to persevere without check or restraint: for *He chasteneth us for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness.*

And as this is a method of government very consistent with the character of God, so is it very suitable to the nature, and circumstances of man. It treats us as weak imperfect creatures, as we really are, in a state of tryal, and probation; wherein afflictions, not only give occasion to the exercise of some virtues, of which without them there could be no proof, but have likewise a tendency to keep up a sense of duty

duty in general, and to engage men to a better observance and practice of it. For it is certainly true of men (and perhaps what some of us may know by experience) that continual ease, and satisfaction in every circumstance of their lives is apt, among some other bad effects, to have this especially, to make them negligent, and indifferent in many important articles of duty,---more easily over-ruled by their passions,---more liable to be seduced by temptations,---their minds less susceptible of admonitions and religious impressions, and their hearts more fully set in them to do evil. But it is the reverse in adversity ; in this condition men are commonly more disposed to attention, it has a tendency to correct that heedlessness, and inadvertency, which arise out of ease and indulgence, it is apt to put the mind on considering, and, when it does so, affords occasion to it of thinking
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on *other* things than high enjoyments and gratifications,----it calls to a *sense* of God, and our dependance on him, and generally puts us into such a disposition, as makes us capable of dwelling on such thoughts as we should not endure to mix with the enjoyment of ease and pleasure, and so becomes the means of amendment and reformation; and what God therefore, who perfectly knows our make, and how we are to be influenced, may with reason be supposed to make use of for the procuring these effects, and for the promoting our truest interest, by leading us through *Chastening* and discipline, to perfection and happiness.

Nor is this method of the Divine proceeding by way of *Chastening* less useful and expedient, with regard to *communities* and *collective bodies*, than it is in the case of *single* persons. Nations and kingdoms

doms of men become degenerate, and corrupt in the *same* way as individuals; *publick* welfare has the same effect on *society*, as *personal* prosperity is apt to have on *particulars*,---an uninterrupted series of it has a tendency to bring on a general carelessness, and neglect of things serious, and, in consequence of that, a general corruption, and licentiousness of manners; and when that is the case, when vice once prevails, and has got the ascendant in a community, there will need some *extraordinary* method to stop it's influence, and prevent it's progress; for the *ordinary* ones of Shame, Fear, Interest, and Example, being taken away from among a people with whom vice is become national, (and if reason too be supposed in it's favour, and men imagine mischief as a *law*, reduce their wickedness to principle, and justify it by argument) it is impossible but impiety and

immorality must reign triumphant over such a people, and establish themselves in an unrestrained settled practice, *unless* God should interpose his corrective judgments, to save, if possible, virtue from totally perishing from among them, and to awaken by *their* means, when *nothing else* can, a thoughtless, hardened people from a state of profligate insensibility, to a sense of their duty, and to a fit disposition for repentance and amendment. And this is what every nation under such circumstances hath reason to expect: for the state and dispositions of kingdoms, and whole societies, with respect to virtue and vice, being of so extensive an influence and use for preserving order, promoting religion, and establishing an universal righteousness throughout the world, as far as the present state of it will permit, it cannot be supposed that God should be regardless in a matter so apparently conducive

ducive to the great end and design of his government; but *rather*, that he *does* on proper occasions use all methods, consistent with the nature of free intelligent creatures, to prevent especially *national* degeneracy and defection; and consequently will not withhold those *chastenings* and corrections, which his wisdom shall at any time see necessary for reforming an hardened abandoned people. And this is sufficient ground for applying the doctrine of the text, to the state of *nations*, as well as of *particulars*, and what makes it no unreasonable supposition that those calamitous events, which affect whole bodies and communities, such as Plagues, Earthquakes, Wars, and Rebelions, may be designed as publick *chastenings* sent to correct publick vices; and justifies our looking upon them as strokes from the hand of God, acting as a monitor and corrector to the world.

For though we *may* be able to account for these things from the natural powers of second causes, either from the established laws of inanimate matter, or from the voluntary determinations of free intelligent agents, yet this is no reason against considering them as instances of the divine displeasure. For as to the law of nature, that is strictly the agency of God, who can give it effect *when*, and *where*, and *in what manner* his wisdom sees fit, either *for correction*, or *for mercy*; and can so order the operations of it, as to destroy the power, the riches, and happiness of any nation, he is disposed to chasten. Or he can equally do this by means of *voluntary* causes, by the temper, disposition, and passions of men. These do certainly greatly influence the state of human affairs, and many of the most extraordinary events which have happened to societies, have plainly drawn their beginnings

ginnings from *them*; but whatever is brought about by *their* means, is as much to be ascribed to a Providence, as if God had done it by any other instrument, or more extraordinary and unusual method; for *these*, though not under such irresistible influences as the motions of the material unintelligent world: yet, as to their *effects* and *consequences*, are as much under the power of God, as the established law of nature is, who, without destroying free agency, can use them as his instruments to produce effects neither intended, nor foreseen by the immediate agents, and bring about by them his own purposes (whatever theirs may be) in the government of the world. Thus is the King of *Assyria* represented by the Prophet *Isaiab*, as the instrument of God, though pursuing his own intentions and designs. O Assyrian, *the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand*

band is my indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation ; and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge ; howbeit, he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so, but it is in his heart to cut off nations, not a few. It was not by any irresistible over-ruling influence on the mind of this ambitious man, that his heart was set upon conquest, and the invasion of the rights of others ; he came to that temper the same way that all free agents come to any resolutions and determinations of their will, but God applied it to his own purpose, so that at the same time that he was gratifying his own wicked ambition, he was serving the designs of Providence, to correct and chasten a sinful degenerate people. And therefore, whenever we see attempts on the common rights and liberties of a community attended with success, and bringing confusion and

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ruin on it's whole polity, we may look farther than the *immediate* cause of such an event, and refer it to the will of God, either permitting the natural effects of ambition, resentment, or any other passion of aspiring designing men to take place, (which his over-ruling Providence can at any time prevent) or else disposing them to such an issue, as it was not *absolutely* necessary in the nature of things they should have, (and which, without his peculiar direction, they would not have had) in order to answer the designs of his Providence, and *to work all things after the counsel of his own will.* And though we are not to expect, in our situation, and under the infirmities of our imperfect understandings, to comprehend the whole view and design of God, in the permission of so much unhappiness and confusion among his creatures, as the wicked passions of unreasonable

sonable men often occasion ; nor can we possibly, amidst so much obscurity and darkness, in which the ways of Providence are concealed from our sight, account for every particular circumstance of it's proceedings in those general calamities, in which God thinks fit sometimes to involve whole communities ; yet this is a principle nevertheless to be maintained, and of great importance to the preserving a pious temper of mind, that, among the many other ends his wisdom may have in view, in permitting such afflictive occurrences, this may be one, *to chasten and correct the world by them, that by his judgments on the earth, the inhabitants thereof may learn righteousness.* And therefore in our reflections on what we suffer ourselves, or see others to suffer, we should not overlook this intention of Providence, and *Despise the Chastening of the Lord, but Hear the*

the rod, and who hath appointed it, and, without presumptuously (and too often uncharitably) assigning uncertain meanings to his dispensations, attend to the obvious and useful application that may be made of them, with regard to repentance and reformation, and be led by them to a due sense of his power, and fear of his displeasure, who can be so terrible in his doings towards the children of men.

And this brings me to the application of what hath been said to our present purpose, and to consider what use the doctrine of the text directs us to make of this day's commemoration, with respect to ourselves, our own times, and present behaviour.

And we make a very *ill* one of it, if we make it an occasion of reproach,

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and mutual accusation ; calumniating each other with the *worst* principles of the *worst* men on both sides, instead of observing, for our mutual instruction and imitation, what were the principles and intentions of the *wisest* and *best*, for *wise* and *good*, there certainly were on *both* ; who, if it had not been for some men, (of ambition and intrigue after power, more than of zeal for public good and welfare) would probably have preserved the honour and prerogative of the crown, with the rights and liberty of the people, which were both afterwards, with the whole frame of government, lost in the anarchy of Rebellion, and ever after remained in an unstable precarious state, till they were settled on the just and rational principles of government, to the mutual security of King and subject, by the establishment of our present excellent constitution,

stitution, *procured* by the Great Deliverer, whom it pleased God to raise up for this nation, after the time he had afflicted it, and *secured* since, from a ruin it was threatened with from Popery and arbitrary power, by the happy succession of the present Royal Family to the throne of these realms.

To keep up a remembrance of any fact, in order to perpetuate hatred and animosity, is not any part of a religious commemoration, nor consequently any part of the duty we are here called to, To make reproachful applications, either of the *particular* wickedness of this day, or of the *general* blame which all parties in the transactions of those sad times were chargeable with, to any now among us, who disavow the charge, and are desirous to justify themselves from the guilt of it; which would be to make

this a fast of *strife* and *debate* among ourselves, instead of humiliation and devotion towards God. But solemn recollection of calamitous events, *as* suffered by Providence, and, *laying aside all bitterness, wrath, and anger, with all malice, to say unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will sin no more*; this surely is but a proper acknowledgment of regard to the moral governor of the world, and on no account unfit, either on a religious or civil one; and it is *This* which is the proper end, and what we should make especially our design in thus calling to publick remembrance what our fore-fathers did, and suffered in their days. This we are to consider with respect to God's Providence, and apply it to ourselves, as far as it is in truth and reason applicable, *not* taking upon us the guilt of crimes, which we know to be truly the object of our detestation and abhorrence;

abhorrence; but by acknowledging the influence of Providence in all national afflictions, Learn, *not to despise the Chastening of the Lord*, but reflect what it is we have to expect, if we make ourselves the proper objects of correction, either by following our ancestors in any of the instances of their wickedness, or by becoming in any *other* way a profligate abandon'd People; and at the same time reflecting too, *what* it is we have to *thank God for*, who have none of those difficulties to contend with which our ancestors had; who are so happy as to have our civil and religious rights preserved to us, under the protection of wise and good laws, administered by a wise and good prince, and a foundation laid for that security in them, that they *had not* to depend on. But though we have none of *those* calamities impending over us, which God permitted

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to fall on *them*, yet there are other ways open, through which he may bring his chastisement on us, which we should do well not to *despise* the possibility of.

— He may *shake the pillars of the earth*, and call on the rocks to fall on us, and the hills to cover us, and there shall be none to deliver: or He may give us up to the power of an inveterate enemy, whose wrath would lay hard upon us, and make our lives bitter with hard bondage.

Or, without any thing of this, He may cause our own wickedness to correct us, and our backslidings to reprove us. We need but be left to the natural consequences of national vice, of voluptuousness, debauchery, and irreligion becoming general among us, to be reduced to as low a state, and be brought under as severe a *Chastening* as this nation ever felt in any former time, and which have brought every society that has been so
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unhappy as to be infested with them, to its final period and dissolution. This should set us all upon exerting ourselves in our several stations, against the growth of licentiousness among us, and *that*, not only to prevent the *natural* mischiefs that attend it, but to divert any *other* evils God may think fit to chastise us with, for a course of wickedness perversely and obstinately continued in. Sensible therefore of *what* we *now* are by the mercies of God, and *what* we *may* be, if for our abuse of them, *He should visit our sins with a rod, and chasten us in his sore displeasure*, let us deprecate his judgments, and endeavour to prevent the execution of them, by repentance and reformation; that making ourselves worthy of his protection, and engaging his Providence on our side, we may remain a great and happy people; and the blessings we have so long, and
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so amply enjoyed, in the security of our liberty and religion, and in the general safety and prosperity of the nation under his present Majesty, be continued to us, and conveyed down to posterity through his Royal Family, to the latest generations. *This*, the greatest of blessings we can ask of God for this nation ; may he of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord.



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